

Not a Valid Issue

We do not think that Senator Fulbright will get very far with his effort to make political capital out of whether Vice President Nixon did or did not express regret to Premier Khrushchev over a congressional "captive nations" resolution in 1959. Certainly Senator Fulbright's apparent attempt to draw a parallel between this alleged incident and Senator Kennedy's suggestion that President Eisenhower should have expressed regret to Mr. K for the U-2 affair falls rather flat. This is because the circumstances in each case were quite different.

In view of the question raised in the presidential campaign over the "captive nations" resolution, we agree with Senator Fulbright that the State Department would be well advised to make public any document bearing on what Mr. Nixon may have said to the Soviet Premier on the subject—provided, of course, no breach of national security is involved. But even if it should be confirmed that the Vice President expressed regret to Mr. Khrushchev for the resolution or its timing, we can see no basis for making a political issue of it. For the resolution was, indeed, ill-timed and of doubtful value. Said The Star editorially at the time:

The resolution requested Mr. Eisenhower to designate the third week in July as Captive Nations Week, and the President duly complied. It happens, however, that this was the week in which our exhibition in Moscow was to be opened, with Mr. Nixon on hand to do the good will honors. If it is necessary or desirable to proclaim such things as Captive Nations Week, along with Apple Week, Sweet Potato Week and Be Kind to Animals Week, why is it also necessary to choose the worst possible time? The chances are that no one in this country really thought about the coincidence of timing. But Mr. Khrushchev did think about it, and he has used it rather effectively—first, to put the chill on both Mr. Nixon's visit and our exhibition, and, second, to argue to his own countrymen that we are meddling in their affairs. This is always a potent propaganda appeal, and the probable result in this case will be to stifle rather than lift the hopes of peoples in the captive countries.

To express regret over this sort of bumbling is far different from expressing regret for espionage flights deemed essential to our Nation's security from surprise attack. Mr. Nixon should have no hesitation in making known—perhaps on his TV appearance in the fourth "great debate" tonight—what the facts may be in connection with the Fulbright attack. Whatever the facts, we can see no valid reason to criticize the Vice President or to drag the incident into the presidential campaign.

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